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FIRST THINGS PERTAINING TO PRESBYTERIANISM ON THE PACIFIC COAST

ROBERT H. BLOSSOM.

The history of Oregon is replete with tragic events, the important actors being in many instances the early Protestant missionaries.

The history of the establishment and growth of Presbyterianism in the "Oregon Country" is romantic and soul-stirring. What was known as the "Oregon Country" was much larger in area than the Oregon of today; it comprised the present states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming—an empire of latent resources.

In 1832 four Nez Perce Indian chiefs left their wigwams in the Oregon Country, on the Columbia River, their objective point being St. Louis. They wished to secure the "White Man's Book of Heaven," of which they had heard, and to know more of its teachings. Two of them were old and venerable, the others young and active. The older chiefs died and were buried in St. Louis. The names of the younger chiefs were "Hee-oh-ks-te-kin" (the rabbit skin leggins) and "H'co-a-h-coah-cotes-min" (no horns on his head). The last mentioned one died while on his way home near the mouth of the Yellowstone River. The other one reached his friends in safety but bringing the sad news of the deaths of all the rest of the party. This remarkable quest was soon published in the newspapers of the land and was read with intense interest by thousands. To some it was a matter of no consequence, but to the missionary organizations it was a call from God, the "Great Spirit" of all. Jason Lee and a party of Methodists answered the "call" first, reaching the land of opportunity in September, 1834. They were followed by missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1835-36.

Note.—For facts, in compilation of this sketch, the writer is indebted to the following authorities:

1. Well authenticated Oregon history.
2. Certified copy of records of the First Presbyterian Church in the Oregon Territory.
3. The original "Church Record of First Congregational Church O. T." and kindly loaned by George H. Himes, of the Oregon Historical Society.
4. Interviews with Mrs. W. P. Abrams, Dr. George F. Whitworth, John C. Carson and Seth L. Pope.
5. Letters from Dr. George F. Whitworth, J. A. Hanna and Seth L. Pope.
6. Church records of the First Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon.

DR. WHITMAN A PRESBYTERIAN.

Rev. Samuel Parker and Dr. Whitman were appointed by the American board to explore the country and report as to the feasibility of establishing missions among the Indians. Dr. Whitman was a member and ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church at Wheeler, New York. In April, 1835, these men started on their long overland journey from St. Louis, Mo. On the 12th of August they and their caravan reached the rendezvous beyond the mountains on the Green River, a branch of the Colorado. They had now crossed the Divide and were beyond the main range of the Rocky Mountains. Here the party remained ten days, during which time Parker and Whitman conferred with the chiefs of the Nez Perces and Flat-heads, explaining to them the object of their journey. The Indians replied that they were anxious to have the missionaries among them. Because of this favorable reply Dr. Whitman suggested that he return with the caravan to the "States" and "obtain associates to come out with him the next year, with the then returning caravan, and establish a mission among these people, and by so doing, save at least a year in bringing the gospel among them."*

On August 22, 1835, Dr. Whitman began his return journey to the "States" and Dr. Parker continued his exploring tour with an Indian escort. Dr. Parker returned home after an absence of two years and two months, having journeyed 28,000 miles.

Dr. Whitman took with him to the East two Nez Perce boys. Their names were Tuetkas and Ites. The first one he called Richard, the other one John. Dr. Whitman reached his home in Rushville, New York, late Saturday evening. He stopped with his brother and no one else of the village knew of his arrival. The next morning he entered the church, followed by his two Indians. His appearance was like that of an apparition. His mother leaped to her feet, shouting, "Why, there is Marcus!"

*Parker's Exploring Tour, page 78.

Rev. H. H. Spalding and his wife (nee Eliza Hart, married to H. H. Spalding, October, 1833) were persuaded to join the Oregon mission, although they had previously planned to go as missionaries to the Osage Indians. Mr. Spalding was a great-great-uncle of Miss Minnie Spaulding, (*) a member of the First Presbyterian Church, Portland. The difference in spelling is explained in this manner: One branch of the family dropped the letter "u." W. H. Gray was Whitman's secular manager. Mr. Gray became prominent in Oregon history and was the author of "A History of Oregon, 1792-1849." Mr. Gray was the father of Mrs. Jacob Kamm (nee Caroline Gray), at present a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon. Whitman was a bridegroom, having just married Miss Narcissa Prentiss, and now the wedding journey from New York to the Columbia River was begun, one of the most remarkable ever recorded. Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding were the *first* white women to cross the plains and over the Rocky Mountains to the great "River of the West," the Columbia. Other members of this notable party were two teamsters, whose names are not known, and the two Indian lads, Richard and John, who witnessed Dr. Whitman's marriage to Miss Prentiss, in February, 1836, in the Presbyterian church at Angelica, New York. Mrs. Whitman had a charming soprano voice, and prior to her marriage led the church choir at Angelica. At twelve years of age she united with the Presbyterian church of Plattsburg, New York. This brave little band of nine persons had left civilization on our western frontiers, May 2, 1836, and arrived at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Walla Walla on September 2d, after a hard overland journey of more than two thousand miles.

W. H. Gray writes concerning their arrival at the old fort as follows: "Their reception must have been witnessed to be fully realized. The gates of the fort were thrown open, the ladies assisted from their horses, and every demonstration of joy and respect manifested." (Gray's History of Oregon, page 142.)

*Miss Spaulding died here in Portland, July 5, 1913.

In a few days the mission party left for Vancouver, arriving there on September 12, 1836. Gray also writes of their kindly reception at Vancouver, at the boat landing, by "one whose hair was then nearly white," (Dr. John McLoughlin) who stepped forward and gave his arm to Mrs. Whitman.

*In a letter from Mrs. Whitman to her mother, dated Walla Walla, Dec. 5, 1836, she says: "We left Vancouver Thursday noon, Nov. 3rd, in two boats," stations having been selected and houses built. Mrs. Whitman informed Dr. McLoughlin that Mr. Gray was their associate and secular agent, and there is evidence to show of his usefulness in this capacity.

GRAY RETURNS EAST FOR REINFORCEMENTS.

Mr. Gray rendered invaluable service in settling the Whitmans at Waiilatpu and the Spaldings at Lapwai. On December 28, 1836, he returned East for reinforcements, arriving in Utica, N. Y., October 15, 1837. Mr. Gray was married to Miss Mary A. Dix at Ithaca, N. Y., on February 27, 1838. The A. B. C. F. M. appointed him Assistant Missionary, under date of March 13, 1838. This interesting document, making Gray's appointment, is now in the archives of the Oregon Historical Society.

The A. B. C. F. M. commissioned Rev. Cushing Eels, Rev. Elkanah Walker, Rev. A. B. Smith, and their wives, and Mr. Cornelius Rogers as the reinforcements for the Oregon Mission, and in the summer of 1838 Mr. Gray, with his wife, conducted the party safely to Oregon.

ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION.

By request of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Roman Catholics sent their missionaries, Fathers F. N. Blanchet and Modeste Demers, from Montreal, Canada, and they arrived in Vancouver (now in Washington) November 24, 1837, after an overland journey of over four thousand miles.

*Transactions of the 19th Annual Reunion, Oregon Pioneer Association for 1891, page 87.

THE WHITMAN AND SPALDING MISSIONS

The Mission, during these early days, was financed and encouraged by the American Board of Foreign Missions, the board at that time being under the joint control of the Congregational, Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches.

Dr. Whitman was a physician and a very energetic and capable man. His station was known as the Waiilatpu Mission, located on the Walla Walla River, six miles from the present site of Walla Walla, among the Cayuse Indians, of which he had personal charge. A station at Lapwai, on the Clearwater, among the Nez Perces, was in charge of Mr. Spalding. Missionary work among the Nez Perces was more successful than with the Cayuses, due, no doubt, to the superior character of the Nez Perces.

The services of Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding were invaluable as teachers in the native schools which were soon established. The Indians were furnished farming utensils and taught the art of agriculture. The squaws were given lessons in knitting, sewing, carding, spinning, weaving, etc. This method of treatment cured many of the habit of roving. The bucks would jestingly remark that they were being made a nation of women. Formerly the squaws did all the manual labor; the bucks hunted and fished and for a diversion engaged in warfare.

The needs of impoverished emigrants entering the new country when passing the mission were promptly met by Dr. Whitman, who sent them on their way rejoicing.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

On August 18, 1838, the *first* Presbyterian Church in North America west of the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific Coast was organized at the house of Dr. Whitman, at the Waiilatpu Mission station, six miles west of the present city of Walla Walla, Wash. Rev. H. H. Spalding was elected pastor and Dr. Marcus Whitman, ruling elder. Mr. Spalding was a member of the Bath Presbytery, New York, *and this first church was attached to the Bath Presbytery.*

These gentlemen together with their wives, Mrs. Eliza A. Spalding, Mrs. Narcissa Whitman, Joseph Maki and Maria Keawe Maki, his wife, were the charter members of the first church organized in "Old Oregon." This membership, a total of five, was all by letter, and it is interesting to note that Mr. Maki and his wife were from the native church in Honolulu, Oahu, Rev. Hiram Bingham, pastor. The old record of this *first* church says: "Brought from the darkness of heathenism into the glorious light of the gospel of peace."

The following resolution was adopted at the time of the organization:

"Resolved, That this Church be governed on the Congregational plan, but attached to the Bath Presbytery, New York, and adopt its form of confession of faith and covenant as ours."

There has been some doubt as to whether this organization was a Presbyterian Church. To remove such doubt the writer has made excerpts from the records of this old church. He has also obtained the written opinion of Rev. William Sylvester Holt, D. D., an able Presbyterian minister, formerly connected with the Oregon Presbytery, but now residing in Philadelphia, Pa., and occupying the position of Associate Secretary on the Ministerial Relief and Sustentation Board. His letter follows:

Philadelphia, Pa., December 18, 1913.

Mr. R. H. Blossom, Chamber of Commerce, Portland, Ore.

Dear Mr. Blossom: Answering yours of December 6, I will say that personally I have never had any question as to the fact that the Church organized at Waiilatpu by Spalding and Whitman was a Presbyterian Church, and I based it on these facts: First, Spalding was a Presbyterian minister. Second, Whitman was an elder in the Presbyterian Church in the State of New York when he went out to Oregon. Third, as to adopting the Congregational form, it certainly was due to the fact that there was no Presbytery in Oregon, and that is the reason they were attached to the Presbytery of Bath, New York, and so no possibility of any form of government except their own. However, members were received by the session and not by the congregation so far as I can recall, and every-

thing was done according to Presbyterian politics, so that I do not see and never have seen any reason why we are not justified in calling it a Presbyterian Church. Their own records also call it a Presbyterian Church.

However, I agree that the resolution in their own records that "this Church be governed on the Congregational plan, but attached to the Bath Presbytery," a thing which would be impossible if they were not a Presbyterian Church, "and adopt its form of confession of faith and covenant as ours," shows that the intent of the man who organized the Church was to organize it as a Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, all those records are in the possession of the Synod of Washington, as they should be, which is solely and always has been a Presbyterian body. The Presbytery of Oregon was not organized until much later, and the church on Clatsop Plains was organized before there was any Presbytery, just as the one was out in Eastern Washington, but there has never been any objection to calling Clatsop Plains a Presbyterian Church, and I never heard of any objection before to calling Waiilatpu a Presbyterian Church. We have always claimed it and I think we are justified in the claim with the facts I have given you above. Respectfully yours,

(Signed) W. S. HOLT.

Mrs. Spalding became a member of the Presbyterian Church in Holland Patent, Oneida County, N. Y., in the Summer of 1826. Transferred her membership to the Presbyterian Church in Lane Seminary, Walnut Hills, Hamilton County, Ohio, and from this latter church to the Waiilatpu.

Mrs. Whitman became a member of the Presbyterian Church in Plattsburgh, Steuben County, N. Y.; was transferred to the Presbyterian Church, Angelica, Alleghany County, N. Y., and from thence to the Waiilatpu.

Mr. Spalding united with the Presbyterian Church in Plattsburgh, Steuben County, N. Y., in the Summer of 1825. Graduated from the Western Reserve College, Hudson, Portage County, Ohio, in the Fall of 1833. Finished his theological course at Lane Seminary, Walnut Hills, Ohio, ordained to the Gospel Ministry by the Bath Presbytery in 1835, and was appointed the same year by the A. B. C. F. M. as missionary. He was one of the organizers of the Waiilatpu Church.

Dr. Whitman was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in Wheeler, Steuben County, N. Y. He was appointed missionary in 1835 by the A. B. C. F. M. Mr. Whitman was one of the organizers of the Wailatpu Church. This information pertaining to the organizers of the Wailatpu Church was taken from the old Wailatpu Church record.

The following excerpts are made from this interesting old record: "On the same day, viz., 18 Aug., Charles Compo, formerly a Catholic, baptized by that church, declaring his disbelief in that faith and expressing a wish to unite with us, was examined and giving satisfactory evidence of being lately born into the Kingdom of Christ, was propounded for admission to the church at some future time. Mr. Pembrem (Pambrun), of Fort Walla Walla, a Catholic present, advised Compo to consider the matter well before he left his own religion to join another."

"19 Aug., 1838, Sabbath. Charles Compo married to a Nez Perces woman with whom he had lived for several years, after which assenting to our confession of faith and covenant, was baptized and admitted to our little flock as the first fruit of our missionary labor in this country."

Sabbath, Sept. 2, 1838. The following persons presenting letters were admitted: Wm. H. Gray and Cornelius Rogers.

The following persons, missionaries of the A. B. C. F. M., not having letters, presented as a substitute their appointment from the board were received, viz.: Mrs. Mary Augusta Gray (maiden name Dix), Rev. A. B. Smith, Mrs. A. B. Smith, Rev. Elkanah Walker, Mrs. Mary R. Walker, Rev. Cushing Eells, Mrs. Myra F. Eells.

Nov. 17, 1839, on profession "the following persons were admitted to the First Presby. Church in Oregon Territory, having been examined as to the grounds of their hopes some six months before, viz., Joseph Tuitakas, the principal Nez Perces chief, some thirty-seven years old. Timothy Timosa, a native of considerable influence, some thirty-seven years old."

May 14, 1843, nine persons (Indians) were admitted to "the First Presbyterian Church in Oregon" * * * "The Lord be thanked. To him be all the praise for these trophies of his victorious grace. Truly this is a glorious day for the powers of light. May these lambs be kept from every temptation and every sin and be nurtured up by the rich grace of God and become perfect men and women in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper was administered. Rev. Mr. Hines, of the Methodist Mission, was present and assisted the pastor. Present also, Rev. Mr. Perkins, of the Methodist Mission; also Elijah White, M.D., sub-agent of Indian A. W. R. M., and Mr. Littlejohn and wife and Mrs. Spalding."

June 23, 1844, Sabbath. Ten persons (Indians) "were admitted to the First Presbyterian Church in Oregon," making twenty-two native members in good and regular standing.

* * * * *

"Dr. Whitman visited Compo in Summer of 47. He appears well, has withstood the efforts of the Catholics to draw him back again, refused to give up his Bible to the priest who wished to burn it."

* * * * *

Because of Indian troubles the church was without a pastor for several years.

Nov. 12, 1871. A total of forty-five, mostly Indians, were admitted to the church and baptized by the pastor, H. H. Spalding. Among this number was Lawyer, head chief of the Nez Perces, and his son, Archie. * * * "This is a glorious day, bless the Lord, oh my soul! That I am permitted to return after so long expulsion in my old age but once to witness the wonderful work of God upon the hearts of this people."

"Chief Lawyer, the noblest man in the Nez Perce tribe, died Jan. 6, 1876. He was an old man and ripe for glory."

A total of ninety-eight were added to the church in November, 1871; all of whom were Indians but one.

Many Indian converts were added to the church during the years 1872 and 1873.

* * * * *

"Labored through the Winter till Feb. 20, 1873. Preached every Sabbath to a crowded house, congregation averaging 320. Three hours a day translating book of Acts, two hours a day with native helpers, three hours a day in school with Bro. Cowley, both languages, Bible the text book."

* * * * *

Whole No. received into First Presbyterian Church, Oregon, from 1838 to April, 1874—961.

Whole No. infants baptized—293.

Various reports were made to the board and Presbytery, showing membership and other statistics. The membership, with few exceptions, was composed of the native population.

INDIANS BAPTIZED.

"May 11, 1874. Today the deeply interesting event occurred of the baptism by Bro. Spalding, apparently on his death bed, of the Umatilla Chief, Umhawalish, who came all the way from his country, 210 miles, for Protestant baptism. He was one of the early pupils of the Martyr Whitman, and the name of Marcus Whitman was given to him in his new relation as a member of the household of faith." After this ceremony the assembly adjourned from the house to the church and Umhawalish's wife was baptized, receiving the name of Dr. Whitman's wife, Narcissa Whitman.

This old record shows that the membership was not confined to Indians at Waiilatpu alone, but they were "gathered in" at Kamiah, Lapwai, Halapawawi, Forks Clear Water, Ashoteen, Salmon River, Umatilla, Spokane, Wild Horse, Simcoe and Lewiston.

Dr. George F. Whitworth in a letter to the writer dated Seattle, Washington, December 29, 1903, says: "I have the original records of 'The First Presbyterian Church in the Territory of Oregon,' organized at the house of Dr. Whitman at the Waiilatpu Mission station, August 18, 1838."

FIRST PRINTING PRESS IN OREGON.

In 1839 the mission received a donation from Rev. H. Bingham's church at Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, of a small print-

ing press, with types, etc., to the value of \$450. The *first book printed* west of the Rocky Mountains, so far as known, was issued that Fall in the Nez Perces language and also in that of the Spokane. (Page 225, "The Conquerors.") This interesting relic, with several booklets in the Nez Perce language, can be seen in the rooms of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

The Protestant missionaries, Jason Lee, Dr. Parker, Marcus Whitman and others, together with laymen like W. H. Gray, were important factors in winning Oregon to the United States. At this early period (1834-1843) it was problematical as to just how the question of sovereignty would be settled. England and America were contending, each with valid claims, for the great Northwest. Jason Lee was a colonizer—the greatest this country and state has ever produced—through his efforts, mainly, the American population was largely increased. The question was practically settled in favor of the United States when, at a public meeting, on May 2, 1843, held at Champoege, then the seat of principal settlement on the Willamette River, it was decided to organize a Provisional Government. The adherents of Great Britain voting fifty against and the Americans fifty-two in favor of the resolution.

WHITMAN'S RIDE.

On October 3, 1842, Dr. Whitman left Waiilatpu with a single companion, Amos Lawrence Lovejoy, a young man from Boston, and the guide, destined for the "States." Each member of the party had a horse; mules were used to carry the supplies. Other remarkable rides have occurred in America's history. The story of the ride of Paul Revere, immortalized by Longfellow in his famous poem; Sheridan's ride during our Civil War. These rides, however, were of short duration—a few hours or a single night at the most.

Whitman's ride was the heroic deed of one man with a single companion, covering a distance of 3000 miles, occupying between four and five months. Many snow storms and blizzards were encountered; frozen streams were crossed; wild beasts

and Indians to be guarded against. Hezekiah Butterworth is the author of a beautiful poem upon this famous ride, entitled, "Whitman's Ride for Oregon." There are those who claim this memorable ride was to save Oregon to the United States. Whilst others stoutly maintain it was made in behalf of his mission. In this connection there are two facts which can never be disputed:

1. That Whitman made the ride during the Winter months.
2. That the ride was one of unparalleled bravery and for a cause which must have been uppermost in Whitman's mind.

There is evidence to show that he called upon President Tyler and other prominent men at Washington, D. C.* That while in the "States" he urged the necessity of early American emigration to Oregon and that measures should be taken to protect them while en route. That he interviewed the officers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions at Boston, explaining the condition of affairs at the mission and making suggestions as to its needs. His wishes were granted. His terrible privations had greatly changed his appearance; then, too, his garb of buckskin trousers, a waistcoat and a blue English duffle coat over which he wore a buffalo overcoat, a few inches shorter than the duffle, was such as might cause comment in the ordinary drawing-room. Dr. Whitman remarked that it was "rather fantastic for a missionary, a buffalo coat with a blue border."

PIONEERS COME.

In the Fall of 1843 it is estimated that nearly 200 wagons, with over 1000 Americans arrived upon the plains of the Columbia. Ox teams were mostly used, averaging about six yoke to the team. Several thousand loose horses and cattle were brought along. The feat of crossing the Blue Mountains with wagons was accomplished and which the commandant of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Hall said was an impossibility.

*He did confer with the Secretary of War. Compare with Marshall's "Acquisition of Oregon," Vol. I, p. 248.—Editor Quarterly.

Dr. Marcus Whitman, who was returning to Oregon after his famous Winter ride, rendered efficient service as guide, physician and friend for this first great immigration to the Oregon country.

Jesse Applegate, a pioneer of 1843, writes of Dr. Whitman: * "I would fain now and here pay a passing tribute to that noble and devoted man, Doctor Whitman. I will obtrude no other name upon the reader, nor would I his, were he of our party or even living, but his stay with us was transient, though the good he did was permanent and he has long since died at his post. From the time he joined us on the Platte until he left us at Fort Hall, his great experience and indomitable energy were of priceless value to the migrating column. His constant advice, which we knew was based upon a knowledge of the road before us, was: 'Travel, Travel, Travel.' Nothing else will take you to the end of your journey; nothing is wise that does not help you along; nothing is good for you that causes a moment's delay. His great authority as a physician saved us many prolonged and perhaps ruinous delays, and it is no disparagement to others to say that to no other individual are the emigrants of 1843 so much indebted for the successful conclusion of their journey as to Dr. Marcus Whitman."

Upon Dr. Whitman's return to his mission at Waiilatpu he found his flour mill, with a quantity of grain, had been burned by disaffected Indians.

FIRST WHITE WOMEN IN OREGON.

On November 1, 1843, Dr. Whitman wrote from Fort Walla Walla to the A. B. C. F. M.: "If I never do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the mountains and prevent the disaster and reaction which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present emigration, and establishing the first wagon road across to the border of the Columbia River, I am satisfied." * * * "I am determined to exert

*A Day With the Cow Column in 1843, Vol. 1, page 371, Oregon Historical Society Quarterly.

myself for my country and to procure such regulations and laws as will best secure both the Indians and white men in their transit and settlement intercourse."

THE WHITMAN MASSACRE.

The first few years of missionary work was very encouraging. It was not long, however, before a spirit of hatred for the whites manifested itself. On November 29, 1847, occurred the horrible massacre of Dr. Whitman, his wife and twelve other persons. Mrs. Whitman was the only woman killed. Fifty-three women and children were held in captivity two weeks by the savages; among them being Eliza, the ten-year-old daughter of Mr. Spalding. Mr. Peter Skene Ogden, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, secured their freedom by paying a ransom in shirts, blankets, guns, ammunition and tobacco to the value of about \$500. Mr. Spalding says that too much praise cannot be awarded Mr. Ogden for his prompt and judicious management of the captives' deliverance.

The leaders in this massacre were the Cayuse Indians, for whose welfare the Doctor and his wife had labored. The uprising is ascribed to the advent of the white man, whose numbers were rapidly increasing through immigration. The Indians said, "If the Americans come to take away their lands and make slaves of them, they would fight so long as they had a drop of blood to shed." They also had a superstitious dread that poison would be given them by the Americans. The massacre was a prelude to the Cayuse War which followed in 1847-48.

CLATSOP PLAINS CHURCH.

The church of Clatsop Plains was organized on September 19, 1846, by Rev. Lewis Thompson and hence *could not* be the *first* Presbyterian church organized on the Pacific Coast, as has been claimed. It must take second honors. "Honor to whom honor is due."

TRIALS OF A PIONEER PREACHER

The following is an extract from an interesting letter to the writer, which gives one some idea of the trials and tribulations of a country preacher during the church's formative period in early Oregon:

(From J. A. Hanna, dated Los Angeles, California, March 18, 1904.)

"I married a young and handsome lady in Pittsburg, Pa., in February, 1852, at 6 o'clock A. M., and started west at 7 o'clock of the same day. In the absence of railroads we came by steamboat on the Ohio and Missouri rivers to St. Joseph, Mo. Here we convened as a Presbyterian colony and purchased our outfit for crossing the continent with ox teams and wagons. Our company consisted of about sixty persons and eighteen wagons. We endured the usual privations and hardships incident to such a journey—had some Indian scares, but nothing serious. After five months we arrived in Oregon City, where we received our first mail from home. Here I learned that the Presbytery of Oregon erected November 19, 1851, stood adjourned to meet with the First Church of Clatsop Plains on the first Thursday in October, 1852. After a few days rest I went by steamboat to Astoria. Accompanied by Elder T. P. Powers and others we proceeded to Clatsop Plains where we found Rev. Lewis Thompson and his congregation assembled at the church. But Rev. E. R. Geary and Rev. Robert Robe were not present and by invitation I preached—and for want of a quorum we adjourned till Friday, when Rev. Lewis Thompson preached. When again we adjourned till Saturday when I preached preparatory to the communion on the Sabbath, and again we adjourned 'sine die.' In those pioneer days Presbytery always met on Thursday and remained over Sabbath and united with the church in celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. On Sunday I preached and assisted the pastor administer the sacrament. It was a precious and comforting season. We afterwards learned why Bros. Geary and Robe failed to get to Presbytery. They had arranged to come to Clatsop Plains by way of an Indian trail over the Coast range of mountains. But Rev. R. Robe's horse became lame and he returned to the river and came by boat. He was too late for Presbytery, but just in time to take the steamer to San Francisco to join the brethren there in constituting the Synod of the Pacific. Had he failed in this there would have been a

failure in constituting the Synod. Brother Geary, after wandering a few days in the mountains in an unsuccessful attempt to get through, returned to his home. I returned by boat to Portland—a town of 400 or 500 inhabitants—and we resumed our journey up the Willamette Valley and settled in Benton County, and on the 24th day of September, 1853, organized the First Presbyterian Church of Corvallis, the majority of whom were members of the colony in crossing the plains.

PRESBYTERY MEETS IN PORTLAND.

“My next attempt to meet with the brethren in Presbytery was in Portland, October 1, 1853; and in doing so I traveled on foot sixty miles from Corvallis to Champoege, thence by boat to Portland, and returned in like manner. This was the first meeting of the Oregon Presbytery since its erection in September, 1851. The members were Rev. Lewis Thompson, Rev. E. R. Geary, Rev. Robert Robe, and Alva Condit, elder from the Clatsop Church. Rev. J. L. Yantis, D. D., and Rev. J. A. Hanna presented their letters and were received and enrolled. I then reported the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Corvallis, which was received and enrolled.

“In answer to a request from interested persons in Portland for church services Rev. J. L. Yantis, D. D., was appointed to preach in Portland as often as convenient and to organize a church as soon as the way appeared clear. And he, with the assistance of Rev. Geo. F. Whitworth, did organize the First Church of Portland, January 1, 1854. Well do I remember seeing Dr. Yantis plodding through mud and water on his little gray pony on his way to Portland, a distance of eighty miles. It was during this meeting of Presbytery that I became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Abrams. They were charter members of the church and were very efficient in its life and progress, and yet they remained warm friends of the Congregational Church—though loyal to the Presbyterian Church in all of its interests.

“But I must relate another meeting of Presbytery under difficulties. Presbytery stood adjourned to meet in Oregon

City, September 28, 1854. Messrs. Thompson, Hanna and Elder Alva Condit were present. Also Rev. Philip Condit, with his letter, seeking membership. Rev. Thompson preached Thursday night in the M. E. Church. There being no quorum we adjourned to Friday. Rev. Hanna preached that night, and still no quorum. We adjourned to meet at the residence of Rev. E. R. Geary at his 'Sherwood' farm in Yamhill County, thirty miles distant. We traveled by steamboat as far as Champoege and then journeyed afoot ten miles across the country to Dr. Geary's, where we held a delightful session of Presbytery and worshipped on the Sabbath in Lafayette.

"We all labored under great difficulties in meeting our appointments; had bad roads and no bridges—traveled on horseback through mud and water and swimming swollen streams.

"During the early pioneer years I was immersed twelve times—each time having a good horse under me. I will illustrate by giving one instance. It occurred on January 1, 1858, in going to preach at Pleasant Grove, thirty-two miles distant. I encountered a swollen stream—swam over, but failed to make a landing, owing to high banks—swam back again and pressed the water from my clothes—went up stream two miles—crossed and continued my journey twenty-two miles—preached that night in my wet clothes—also preached twice on Sabbath, returned home on Monday, and, if my memory serves me right my clothes were dry when I reached home. Other ministers had similar trials—but we lived through it all. I wish to say for those early pioneer ministers (with the exception of Dr. Yantis) that they all gave their lives to the work on this coast. They lived, labored and died on the field. Brother Robe and myself only live to tell of their good works. They are held in blessed memory. Laid broad and deep the foundations and builded better than they knew."

Note.—Messrs. Robe and Hanna have since died.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT
PORTLAND, OREGON.

Previous to the organization of the First Presbyterian Church, on January 1, 1854, Presbyterians upon their arrival in Portland found here no church home. The Congregational brethren had preceded them and established a house of worship. The two denominations are not so wide apart in their belief. It is therefore not surprising that Presbyterians affiliated with the Congregational Church in Portland's early days.

We find, however, that Presbyterians assisted in the organization of *this First Congregational Church*. Hence a word concerning this will be eminently proper. The *original* records of the Congregational Church are preserved and are now in the archives of the Oregon Historical Society. This book, called (Record No. 1), "Church Record of First Congregational Church, O. T.," is yellow with age. Its leaves are becoming loosened from their binding and they are much worn by the "tooth of time."

It was with a feeling akin to reverence that we turned its pages and gazed upon the record of a work so faithfully performed by the pioneer missionaries and preachers—by the pioneer fathers and mothers—many of whom have gone to their heavenly home.

On folio 1 of this ancient "Record" it is stated, that on Sunday, June 15, 1851, the organization of the First Congregational Church was effected by choosing Rev. H. Lyman as pastor; and among others, who "manifested by rising, their willingness to become members and form the church" are found the names of Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Abrams and D. K. Abrams. W. P. Abrams was chosen clerk pro tem and the minutes are signed by him. At a meeting of the "male members," Saturday evening, July 5, 1851, W. P. Abrams and N. C. Sturtevant were chosen deacons. These being the first deacons of the First Congregational Church.

And now, in this old "Record" (folios 29 and 30), appear these minutes bearing directly upon the organization of the First Presbyterian Church, viz.:

Portland, January 1, 1854.

"This being the regular Sabbath for a season of communion, and a preparatory lecture having been given last evening, the ordinance was this morning celebrated according to arrangement. The number present was fewer than usual, owing to the absence of some, who were this day dismissed, according to their own request, to aid in forming an Old School Presbyterian Church today in this city. The members dismissed were Brothers James McKeown, Deacon W. P. Abrams and Mrs. Sarah L. Abrams. It was unanimously voted that they should receive letters, showing their good and regular standing in this church, and also recommending them to the watch and fellowship of any evangelical church with which they may become connected. The season, though saddened by the departure and absence of esteemed members, was yet one of much interest.

"H. LYMAN, Pastor."

PRESBYTERIANS IN PORTLAND.

A meeting of the Presbytery of Oregon was held October 1, 1853, in the hall at the Canton House, in this city, then a thriving village of 400 or 500 inhabitants. The following members of the Presbytery were present, viz.: Rev. J. L. Yantis, D.D.; Rev. Ed. R. Geary, D.D.; Rev. Lewis Thompson, Rev. Robert Robe, Rev. J. A. Hanna and Elder Alva Condit. On Sabbath morning, October 3, 1853, Rev. J. L. Yantis preached in the First Congregational Church, northwest corner of Second and Jefferson streets, and Rev. J. A. Hanna occupied the pulpit of the First Methodist Church, then on Taylor street, between Second and Third streets.

In the afternoon of the same day (October 3, 1853), those interested met at the home of William P. Abrams, northwest corner of First and Jefferson streets, and a petition to the Presbytery was prepared asking authority to organize a church. The request was granted and Dr. J. L. Yantis appointed to carry the same into effect. A few weeks later Rev. Geo. F. Whitworth and family arrived in the Territory and Dr. Whitworth was invited to assist Dr. Yantis in the work.

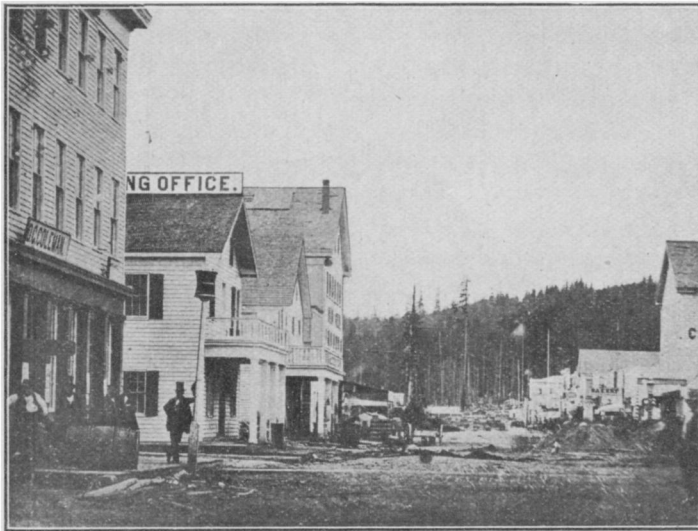
FIRST CHURCH ORGANIZED.

Previous to the organization of the church Dr. Whitworth preached for several weeks in the hall of the old Canton House. And in the same building on the morning of January 1, 1854, Dr. Yantis preached from Luke 12:32 ("Fear not little flock"), and in the afternoon of *this* day a preliminary meeting was held at the residence of W. P. Abrams, First and Jefferson streets, and steps were taken to organize the church. Messrs. Wm. P. Abrams and James McKeown were elected elders. The following entry was made by Dr. Whitworth in his diary at the time: "In the afternoon met at Mr. Abrams' and organized church with ten members. At night preached from Heb. 2:4, after which Dr. Yantis ordained the elders elect."

The installation of the elders and the organization of the church was completed on Sunday evening, January 1, 1854, in this old historic structure, i. e., the hall of the Canton House. At this meeting there were no other ministers present but Dr. Yantis and Dr. Whitworth.

According to Dr. Whitworth's diary, entries made at the time, he supplied the church until the middle of February, 1854; to be specific, he preached every Sabbath in January after the first but one, the 22d, when "he was unable by reason of tooth and face-ache, but preached on the 29th and on the 5th and 12th of February," when on the 13th he left for Puget Sound.

The Canton House, a wooden structure, was owned jointly by William P. Abrams and Captain Stephen Coffin and was situated on the northeast corner of Front and Washington streets. This old building has played a large part in the history of Portland. When originally built it was occupied on the grade floor by two stores, the second story by rooms and offices and in the third was the hall, in which the meetings just referred to were held. This hall was a large one and was used as an assembly hall for various occasions. The society people of Portland would have dancing parties and it was here that such functions were held. It was also used by the Sons of Temperance, and at a later date by Samaritan Lodge, I. O. O. F.



FRONT STREET, SOUTH FROM STARK, 1852.

Fourth building on the left is the Canton House, Front and Washington Streets, afterwards the American Exchange.

First Presbyterian Church organized in the third story of this building on January 1, 1854, by Rev. J. L. Yantis, D. D., assisted by Rev. Geo. F. Whitworth.

The above picture is a reproduction of a daguerreotype taken by L. H. Wakefield, a pioneer artist of Portland.

This building had many names. It was first called the Canton House, then "Pioneer Hotel," then "Lincoln House," and finally the American Exchange. For many years it was used as a hotel and under its last name (American Exchange) was one of Portland's best resorts. It was moved, some years ago, to the northeast corner of Front and Jefferson streets, where it now stands in a remodeled condition. It is a peculiar coincidence that this old structure now covers the identical spot on which Wm. P. Abrams and Stephen Coffin, in the Winter of 1850, constructed and operated the first steam sawmill in the Northwest, i. e., Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

ORIGINAL MEMBERS.

Many are curious to know who these first ten members were (all joining by letter). There is no accessible record giving this information, but Mrs. W. P. Abrams and Dr. Whitworth have recalled the names of eight, viz.: Mrs. Sarah H. Thomson, Mrs. Mary Eliza Whitworth (Dr. Whitworth's wife), Miss Sarah Jane Thomson, Miss Mary Joanna Thomson (now Mrs. Mary J. Beatty), W. P. Abrams, Mrs. W. P. Abrams, James McKeown and Archibald H. Bell. Mrs. Sarah H. Thomson was the mother of Mrs. Whitworth and the Misses Thomson were the granddaughters of Mrs. Sarah H. Thomson. Mr. and Mrs. Abrams were the parents of Mrs. H. A. Hogue (nee Sarah L. Abrams), and grandparents of Harry W. Hogue and Chester J. Hogue, present members of the church.

And did they have a choir for the church in 1854? Yes, indeed! and excellent music was furnished. The following are known to have assisted in the singing: Dr. J. G. Glenn, John C. Carson, D. R. Carson, Captain W. S. Powell and Mrs. Caroline E. Corbett. At times the choir was led by D. R. Carson, a brother of John C. Carson. Of these early singers Captain W. S. Powell is the only survivor.

In these early days the Red Man of the forest was much in evidence. There were several good camping places along the Willamette's bank. On the east side of the river, in the vicinity of Water street, between Washington, Stark and Burnside streets, the bank was low and flat, extending some distance

out before the water was reached. Willows and other trees grew on these "flats" and here, in large numbers, the Indians pitched their tents.

Another excellent camping place was at the foot of Jefferson street, on the west bank, near Abrams' and Coffin's mill—as many as 150 Indians being in camp at one time. Mrs. Abrams says that the Indians were inveterate gamblers and that when she resided on First and Jefferson streets they often kept her awake nights with their incessant noise, which they always made when indulging in their favorite game.

FIRST CHURCH REORGANIZED.

The First Church was reorganized August 4, 1860.

The first pastor was Rev. P. S. Caffrey.

The first members received (all by letter) at this organization were: S. M. Hensill, Israel Mitchell, Mrs. Mary Robertson, Mrs. Margaret Smith, Mrs. Eliza Ainsworth, Mrs. M. Jane Hensill, Mrs. Frances Sophia Law, Mrs. Sarah J. Mead, Miss Leonora Blossom, James McKeown, Mrs. Elizabeth L. Blossom, A. H. Bell, Mrs. Jerusha Hedges, Mrs. Caroline Couch, Mrs. C. A. Ladd, Mrs. Polona Clark and Mrs. Agnes Grooms—a total charter membership of seventeen.

The first elders of the reorganized church were: James McKeown, Israel Mitchell and Smith M. Hensill.

The first deacon of the church was A. H. Bell.

The first board of trustees were: W. S. Ladd, J. C. Ainsworth, H. A. Hogue, J. M. Blossom and B. F. Smith.

Some of the first singers were: Mrs. J. W. J. Pearson, Mrs. W. B. Mead, Miss Frances Holman, Miss A. Chamberlain (now Mrs. E. G. Randall), J. B. Wyatt, Capt. H. L. Hoyt, W. B. Mead, and P. C. Schuyler.

All of the friends whom the writer interviewed and corresponded with have since died.

As we bring this sketch to a close, we are reminded that the pioneer preachers and the pioneer church members are passing away. Their work was a noble one and their life, as many of us know, was one of sublime patience and courage.

Should we forget these early Oregon Presbyterian Church fathers? Whitman, the medical missionary and martyr, and his wife, Narcissa Whitman, the only woman martyr; Spalding, the zealous worker; Gray, the secular manager and assistant missionary, author of Oregon's first history, and one of the leading organizers of Oregon's Provisional Government in 1843.

We cannot refrain from again naming Jason Lee, the great Methodist missionary, a man whose early activities in behalf of Oregon should never be forgotten. There are others whose names appear on the roll of honor, known in our day as "Fathers of Oregon,"—all enshrined in the hearts of liberty-loving and law-abiding people.

We shall never forget the dramatic story of the heroes and heroines in the planting of the cross and the establishment of civil government in Old Oregon!